

THE SOUTH CAROLINA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT



In this issue »

DDS honored with Phoenix Award »

Around the state »

Did you know... »

Events »

Follow us on the web »

For Individuals »

For Businesses »

For Employers »

Contact Us »

About Us »

scvrd.net »

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DDS honored with Phoenix Award

"I could not be more proud of the staff," says Shirley Jarrett, Disability Determination Services (DDS) Director. "They are fantastic!"

As Jarrett speaks about the South Carolina DDS receiving the prestigious Phoenix Award in recognition of its exemplary performance and service to people with disabilities in South Carolina in 2012, she continually refers to the quality of work and dedication of the DDS staff.



"Our staff exceed their goals and do an incredible job despite the many challenges and obstacles they face," she says.

The Phoenix Award is a national award conferred by the Social Security Administration's Associate Commissioner to a DDS that has overcome significant obstacles to achieve agency goals. This year, SC DDS was one of only two states to receive this award.

SC DDS adjudicated 95,320 claims, surpassing their budgeted workload, while maintaining a net accuracy of 97.2% and decreasing processing time for initial claims to 85.5 days. This was accomplished despite an unusually high staff attrition rate and imposed limits in recruiting new employees.

"It is with immense gratitude and pride that I celebrate the Phoenix Award with all of my fellow employees of the South Carolina DDS in recognition of our resolve to provide quality service to the citizens of South Carolina, regardless of the challenges we encounter," says Jarrett.

SCVRD Board Chairman Derle Lowder, Sr. adds, "My heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to Shirley Jarrett and the outstanding staff in Columbia, Greenville, Charleston and the Office of State Claims for their exemplary work and professionalism in providing responsive, timely, and accurate disability determination decisions."

"Congratulations to our DDS staff and thank you for your hard work and dedication," says Barbara Hollis, SCVRD Commissioner. "This national recognition is well deserved."

With excitement and momentum surrounding the award growing, DDS offices around the state celebrated "Phoenix Award Day" on August 7, with staff enjoying food, recreation and team building games.

Jarrett says that the award has been a big boost to morale, especially as the staff is facing another challenging year.

"I know they can handle it," she says. "They are amazing."



DDS Director Shirley Jarrett, right, was joined by former director Tom Paige during the Phoenix Award Day celebration.





The Administration office held the "Phoenix Olympics" as part of Phoenix Award Day. Pictured is the gold medal winning team. Left to right: Mark Staehle, Lametti Lambert, Sheena Gilyard, Rene Walker and Darlene Scott.





The Charleston office was decorated with beautiful Phoenix posters created by Lisa Carter and this superb piece of Phoenix artwork pictured above, hand crafted by Rose Doyle (left) and Megan Ward. Staff enjoyed a "spectacular day featuring a Festival of Food," says Blake Monson, Charleston DDS Regional Supervisor.



Charleston DDS staff.



Columbia DDS staff



Greenville DDS staff.



Office of State Claims staff.

Around the state

DDS fiscal team wins award



SC DDS's Administrative Fiscal Team was awarded the Social Security Administration (SSA) Associate Commissioner's Team Award for fiscal year 2012 for demonstrating conspicuous dedication, substantially reducing a pending fiscal backlog, and improving customer service with the medical community.

Left to right, front row: Darlene Scott, Kenneth Norris, and Lesa Sox.
Middle row: Rosalind Tucker, Beverly Sutton, Anita Monts, Laureen Zipp.
Back row: Gregory Sheroian, Lessie Hodges, Freda McCray, Stephanie Smith-Morell, Willie Slice, Mary Collins. Not Pictured: Frances Bobbitt, Mae Morant, Rene Walker, Barbara McClure.

Summer Transition Program at The Bryant Center



During the two-week Summer Transition Program (July 29-August 9) at The Bryant Center, transition students participated in physical therapy and exercise; learned independent living skills through occupational therapy; enhanced their leadership, teamwork and communication skills; explored careers and post-secondary interests; and engaged in mock interviews and other job preparedness activities.

The program was organized by Julie Atkins and Susan Looper, Transition Counselors.

Aiken Summer Institute



Charlie Hartz was the guest speaker for Aiken's Summer Institute. The owner of two Dunkin Donut stores in Aiken, Hartz discussed the following topics with transition clients: employer expectations, decision making, interview techniques, appearance and job survival skills.

Hartz also conducted mock interviews with the clients. had a question and

answer period and toured the training center.



Aiken staff attend Chamber of Commerce event



The popular Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce annual State of Our Community Luncheon, now in its seventh year, was held on August 21st. This event gives business, civic, community, and education leaders the opportunity to hear firsthand what is in the works, and what is on the horizon, for the community.

Aiken Area staff attending included: Jeanette Murray, Area Supervisor; John McMurtrie, Center Manager; Freddie Boan, BDS; Shayla Padgett, ACE/JPI; and Melissa Hildebrand, Counselor. Also attending were Advisory Board Members Jim Carlisle and Dennis Orwat.

Orangeburg clients learn about jobs at The Regional Medical Center

Sonya Medley, Senior HR Specialist at The Regional Medical Center (TRMC), presented to a group of clients in the Orangeburg Office on July 18.

Medley discussed how to apply for employment at TRMC, gave tips for completing applications and preparing for interviews, and conducted mock interviews with several clients. She also gave clients information about in-demand jobs in the healthcare field, including how to train for these jobs and average salaries.



Standing: Freddie Boan, BDS; Antonio Hardy; Xavier Thompson, VR Intern; Jasmine, TRMC Intern; Diane Brown; Kendra Govan; Yolanda Crawford; Angie Garner; Rodnequa Riley; Samandra Johnson; Senovia Mack; Amanda Holliday; Adrian Crutchfield; Sonya Medley, TRMC Senior HR Specialist; Kitty Bamberg, Job Coach.

Seated: Christine Jenkins; Breanna Carter; Keianna Davis; Patricia Hitzler; Monica Johnson.

VR message heard throughout Oconee County

Beverly Smith, VR counselor, and Anna Connelly, VR Business Development Specialist, were "live, on air" on *Coffee Time*, a 30-minute public affairs radio program that airs weekdays at 8:30 am on WSNW 103.3 FM. The program was broadcast on August 15.

"We wanted to be part of this show to bring more awareness about what SCVRD does, who our clients are, what type of programs we offer and much more."

Smith and Connelly have been invited back in October, during National Disability Employment Awareness Month, to speak about the agency, its mission and the clients, and more.

Oconee-Pickens hosts the Oconee County Industrial Group

The Oconee-Pickens office hosted the monthly meeting for the Oconee County Industrial Group (OCIG), which is spearheaded by the Oconee County Economic Development office, on Friday, August 16.

Fifteen members of the OCIG plus three VR representatives met to review trends in local industries, hear comments from plant managers, and view a presentation by Tim Bowen, Anderson Campus Director of Tri-County Technical College. VR staff members spoke about guidance and counseling and helping prepare clients to be job ready.

The meeting culminated with a tour of the training center, showcasing VR clients in a typical working environment and highlighting the variety of contracts at the center.

Did you know...

...that the state has announced new postsecondary education scholarships for students with intellectual disabilities?

The funding is through the College Transition Connection and the Commission on Higher Education. Needs-based grants are available to students with intellectual disabilities in programs at USC-Columbia, Clemson, Coastal Carolina, College of Charleston and Winthrop.



For more information visit [College Transition Connection](#).

Events

Spartanburg

- September 9 - **Drop-In** recognizing Transition School Partners.
For more information, call 864-585-3693 or 866-451-1480

Orangeburg

- September 11 - **Bounce Back Workshop**. This full day event is devoted to assisting individuals with criminal backgrounds become work ready.
- October 8 - **Open House**.
- October 22 - **Disability Mentoring Day**.
For more information, call 803-534-4939

Greenville/Greer

- September 19 - The transition team is hosting **SSI/SSDI information sessions** for students and parents which will cover information about benefits and work.
- October 3 - The Greenville Area Office is again taking part in the annual **Greenville Chamber Barbecue Bash**, a celebration of the success of Greenville area manufacturers. More than 500 business and community leaders typically attend the event, held on the Hartness Estate, which adjoins the Hartness International packaging equipment design, engineering and manufacturing facilities. SCVRD is recognized as a Bronze sponsor through in kind contributions. SCVRD clients participate in the event, and assist with set-up and clean-up. Involvement in the event provides VR clients with firsthand knowledge of what is involved in planning large events. The event also offers staff an opportunity to network with and demonstrate to our business partners the talent and skills that VR clients possess.

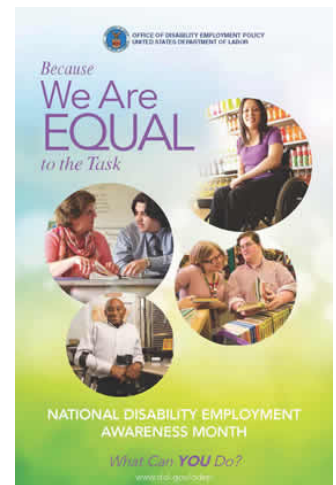
For more information, call 864-297-3066

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October is **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**. NDEAM raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities. The theme for 2013 is "Because We Are EQUAL to the Task."

SCVRD offices around the state will be holding a variety of events as part of NDEAM, including Disability Mentoring Day, which provides job-shadowing opportunities to high school junior and seniors.

While NDEAM is led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, its true spirit lies in the many observances held at the grassroots level across the nation every year. Employers of



Get [more information about NDEAM](#)

Enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment

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